



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NRCS Makes History in Colorado

**April 7, 2008, Lakewood, CO** – True partnership and commitment to land stewardship was the driving force behind three local organizations, one local unit of government, and one federal agency coming together to preserve more than 12,000 acres of some of Colorado's most desirable agricultural and majestic landscapes. Recently, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Colorado Cattlemen's Agriculture Land Trust (CCALT), Arapahoe County, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) purchased a conservation easement that would protect the wildlife habitat and grand views encompassed on the Middle Bijou Creek Ranch. This project is the largest easement ever funded through the NRCS' Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP).

*"Conserving natural resources, our soil, water, air, plants, and animal habitat is the primary reason NRCS exists,"* says Gary Finstad, NRCS Easement Coordinator, Lakewood, CO. *"We've been proud partners with numerous land trusts, environmental and natural resource organizations for some time now and are thrilled when these kinds of opportunities present themselves. It's a testimony to what true cooperation can do."*

NRCS' Farm and Ranch lands Protection Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep working farms and ranch lands in agricultural use. *"It's an important program,"* Finstad goes on to say. *"It's probably one of the most important we have here in Colorado because Colorado is one of the fastest growing states population wise as numerous cities continue to be sited within the top 10 places to live in the US. Many of those cities are along the Front Range which contains prime agricultural lands. Statistics have shown that agricultural lands were being converted at a rate of more than 120,000 acres per year and that was more than 10 years ago."*

The Middle Bijou Creek Ranch contains 20 square miles of rural open space and provides habitat for numerous plant communities including 93 native plant species, countless wildlife like the endangered western burrowing owl, and is also an important habitat for the northern leopard frog. According to a recently published article about this project, Chris West, Executive Director of the CCALT said, *"This is what conservation should look like."*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the primary federal source of technical and financial assistance to private landowners for natural resources conservation. The Agency's mission is to help people help the land and with more than \$200,000,000 invested in the conservation of Colorado's natural resources and countless hours of hands on technical assistance provided to Colorado landowners and producers over the past five years, the Agency continues to realize its vision of ensuring productive lands and a healthy environment. For additional information about NRCS or the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, please visit [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).

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